

sisted of imitations of conventional designs, with some details changed, as well as completely new models. These falsifications do not lack value, for they reveal an innate ability to adapt to given circumstances without losing sight of the traditional carving techniques.

Otto Klein describes the difference between the ancient and the modern carvings very well: "An essential difference between the ideo-plastic manifestations of the past and those of recent times: while the former were generated on a religious basis, the latter resulted from individual efforts of some proficient sculptors who took advantage of a unique opportunity" (Klein 1988:246).

Without a doubt, woodcarving was affected by contact with the west. The loss of sacredness could well have occurred before the arrival of the first missionaries; however, the strong influence of the Catholic Church is clear. It became the nexus, or the intermediary between humans and the higher forces. This is how many carvings became detached from their original meaning, from their symbolism; desecrated and out of context, they survived in form only. However, with time they acquired a new meaning and, finally, even new designs emerged.

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## Moai Sightings

### The Eyes of the Moai or A Perfect Night Out in Manhattan

Peter Gravild Korning, Denmark

SINCE LAST MAY, NEW YORK CITY counts yet another celebrity among its citizens: a new-born *moai* with sparkling new eyes. It greets visitors to the American Museum of Natural History from its place in the basement just to the left of the entrance. It is tangible proof of the success of the "Legacies of a People, Masters of Stone" project that took place May 3-16 at various locations at the museum. The project included a number

of public lectures by distinguished researchers on Easter Island archaeology, history, ecology and preservation, as well as workshops on Rapanui art. Robert Hemm and Marcelo Mendez showed an excellent documentary, an aerial survey of Easter Island, with some stunning footage.

Twenty Rapanui islanders and their unique skills were the main attraction. They were flown in for the occasion, together with a huge lump of volcanic rock from the island. The Rapanui included four stone carvers and sixteen members of the Riu Hoko Rapa Nui dance troupe. The four carvers, well-known artisans of the island, Pedro Pakarati Araki, Pablo Hereveri Teao, Benedicto Tuki Pate and Esteban Pakarati, spent twelve days transforming the rock into a 1999 *moai*. The stone was not the traditional volcanic tuff from Rano Raraku, but a lump of the more malleable red scoria from Maunga Orito, a type of stone originally used primarily for *pukao*. It was collected from Maunga Orito, a quarry south of Puna Pau. The carvers, enclosed in a Plexiglas 'cage' to protect the audience from flying rock fragments, daily until the *moai* was lying, ready and waiting. The Riu Hoko made regular appearances during the carving and performed Polynesian dances in front of the cage. When not performing, they managed workshops about Easter Island music, dance, and traditional body painting. After the statue had been erected and the finishing touches added, the carvers added two eyes made of coral.

## A MEMORABLE NIGHT

My wife and I paid several visits to the slowly evolving *moai* during the third week of May (always thankful of the museum's pay-what-you-like policy). On Friday the 14<sup>th</sup> we had the pleasure of watching the transformation of the *moai* from a stony enigma to an alert guardian and watchman: with much Pomp and Circumstance, the eyes were placed in their sockets in a (possible) reconstruction of history.

The evening started at the Linder Theater with a lecture, "Archaeology and Ecology of Easter Island" by distinguished archaeologist Sergio Rapu, discoverer of the one authentic *moai* eye in existence, and former governor of the island. Rapu made the discovery during an excavation at Ahu Nau Nau, the 'main' *ahu* at 'Anakena Beach. About fifteen fragments of coral found beneath the *ahu* were eventually pieced together for the famous 'eye', an eye socket-shaped piece of carved coral representing the almond-shaped visible part of an eye (with a red stone for a pupil) and fitting into a *moai* eye socket. The eye is now one of the main attractions of the Padre Sebastián Englert Archaeological Museum on the island where Rapu was director from 1969 to 1990. Though other coral fragments have been found on the island, none have been pieced together as another eye. Rapu made an excellent speech about the cultural and natural history of Rapa Nui from the first settlements until after the arrival of Europeans in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

After Rapu's lecture the audience was guided to the Kaufmann Theater where the Riu Hoko Rapa Nui performed a succession of absolutely stunning dances and chants to the music of the *mae'aporo*, the *fatete* and the *toere*. Performing with their usual confidence and an energy level worthy of an Iggy Pop concert, the dancers took the New York audience by storm,

barely leaving time enough for the enthusiastic applause between numbers. Surely the best show in town that night!

After the Riu Hoko performance the newly carved *moai* eyes were brought to the scene and Sergio Rapu said a few well-chosen words. Then the Rapanui, followed by everybody else, went in procession from the theatre to the *moai* waiting in the basement. Seeing a procession of Rapa Nui in traditional costumes and body paint in the half-lit museum at night was an almost surreal experience and one we shall never forget. It was as if a forgotten, long-gone people had suddenly returned to the world of the living.

#### THE TRANSFORMATION

The *moai* awaited in the basement with all the withdrawn aloofness common to its older relatives thousands of miles away. The audience formed a semicircle around some of the Riu Hoko members who performed a series of short chants and dance steps in front of the statue. Finally a member of the troupe placed the eyes in their sockets. The transformation was immediate and extraordinary! The *moai* seemed to wake up. It lost much of its air of mystery, becoming alert, vigilant, and just a little bit frightening! It must have been the perfect guardian of its village. The effect of such a transformation on the hearts and minds of the prehistoric Rapa Nui must have been overwhelming.

The eye-opening ritual is of course utterly inauthentic from a historical point of view as nobody has the faintest idea of how the original eyes were placed in their sockets. In all probability this information is lost in time and will never be recovered. But it seems probable that some kind of ritual would accompany an occasion as important as this.

It is tempting to speculate on the fate of the *moai* eyes. Let us for a moment assume (for it is by no means a certainty) that many statues had inlaid eyes, "many" not in the sense of a certain amount or percentage, but many in the same sense that many *moai* had *pukao*. It was a feature that a statue would typically have. It seems reasonable to assume that the destruction of a *moai* would include the removal and/or destruction of its eyes, since these undoubtedly increased its power or at least (to the sacrilegious destroyer) had important symbolic meaning. Maybe the statues were thought to be completely powerless without their eyes, the eyes being, in prosaic language, a kind of magic battery. One could see an indication towards this in the fact that the eye-sockets of



A group with Sergio Rapu (center) standing in front of the completed *moai* at the Museum of Natural History New York. (Photo by Peter Korning).

*moai* were not carved at the quarry of Rano Raraku but later in the process. If this were the case, a logical way to destroy a statue would be to start with its eyes, thus rendering it "helpless" against the following attacks.

The original number of eyes is no indication of how many one would reasonably expect to have survived the toppling of the statues. Indeed it could be argued that the more common (how strange the word sounds in connection with such an intensely religious object as a *moai*) a feature the eyes were, the more systematic and thorough their subsequent destruction would have been.

The above, however, is pure speculation, and in all probability we will never know what happened to the eyes. Maybe they were dropped into the ocean offshore, lost in the depths or waiting for some diver to make the discovery of his life. Maybe they lie in a

long-forgotten cave in the islands underground. Maybe they were all smashed during a footnote of the destruction of the whole religious structure of the island. Maybe less than a handful of the statues ever had eyes, although it seems unlikely.

The eye-opening ceremony was an important lesson to us not to forget that the *moai* must have appeared very differently to the society that created them than to visitors to the archaeological sites, speculating on their origin and function. I recommend seeing a *moai* with inlaid eyes to get a more balanced view of how they 'should' be perceived. The only place to see an 'awakened' statue at this time, to the best of my knowledge, is at Tahai on the outskirts of Hanga Roa—unless of course you happen to be on the Upper West Side, Manhattan. ♦



Riu Hoko Rapa Nui performing at the Kaufmann Theater (Photo by Peter Korning).

#### ASPECTS OF THE EYE

After the ceremony there was time for a quick chat with Rapu. When asked if the original eye has ever been scientifically dated he answered that it is in the process of being dated by a California team. Strictly preliminary (Rapu stresses this point) results indicate that the coral the eye is carved from is approximately 200 years older than the *moai* it was found beneath. This, however, does not necessarily present a problem. The eye could originally have belonged to another statue or the coral could have been stored for many years, perhaps as part of a religious preparatory process, before or after being carved in the shape of an eye socket.

## What's New in Polynesia

THE INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE PROGRAMME is a project of the Indigenous Peoples Biodiversity Network, and its object is to support indigenous peoples' activities that help to preserve local traditional knowledge, or provide recognition and compensation for innovations made by indigenous peoples at the local, national, regional and international levels. The small grants program will provide up to US\$12,000 per project to support research activities that build indigenous organizational capacity in research techniques such as conservation of biological diversity, the continuation of indigenous cultures, or laying the foundation for sustainable livelihoods. For guidelines on applications, contact Ms Aroha Te Pareake Mead, PO Box 13-177, Johnsonville, Wellington, New Zealand.

RESEARCH ON KAVA continues at the University of the South Pacific where six active lactones have been extracted from *Piper methysticum* (kava). These work as anti-anxiety agents. A system has been developed whereby up to 30% of active kava lactones can be extracted. Kava from Vanuatu was found to have the strongest drowsiness effect. An herbal kava drug, *Kava-herbal Serenity* is now sold in Fiji's drug stores. Classified as a narcotic and hypnotic, a mild relaxant and a weak euphoric, the dried root of kava is used for tea, and in capsules and tinctures.

*Bulletin of the University of the South Pacific, Vol. 32(11) 1999*

BIRD EXTINCTION IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS was discussed in a lecture by Professors David Steadman and Janet Franklin, given at the University of the South Pacific. Early Lapita settlers brought to extinction a large number of birds including rails, parrots, pigeons, doves, megapodes, and song birds. These birds were easy to obtain and a preferred source of food. In addition, the introduction of rats, pigs, and dogs by early Polynesians played a major role in extinction. On smaller islands, native birds depended on native forests. Because of the destruction of habitat, now an on-going process, there is greater danger of even further extinction. During the first 300 years of settlement by Lapita people of the Ha'apai group in Tonga, nearly two-thirds of the original land birds were wiped out.

*Bulletin of the University of the South Pacific, Vol. 32(13) 1999*

MORE ISLANDS LOST TO CLIMATE CHANGE: Tebua Tarawa and Abanuea in Kiribati have disappeared beneath the waves as sea levels continue to climb. Although those two were uninhabited, other islands with inhabitants are at risk. Most of the 29 atolls in the Marshalls are suffering and, on one, World War II graves are being washed away.

All the islands have had damage from flooding and high tides, with populated areas being affected. Even if not suffering directly, salt poisoning of the soils as a result of the higher water tables is a serious problem.

*Pacific News Bulletin 14(6), 1999*

## NIUE

### LANGUAGE DAY ON NIUE

"LEO PASIFIKA: THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON OCEANIC LINGUISTICS" was held from July 5-9, 1999, on the tiny South Pacific island of Niue, situated between Tonga and the Cook Islands. Some thirty experts on Oceanic languages presented a range of papers on this remote Polynesian nation which hosted such a conference for the first time. Organized by Dr Wolfgang Sperlich, Elizabeth Pascal, Dr Steven Roger Fischer, and His Excellency Atapana Siakimotu, Consul General of Niue in New Zealand, the conference enjoyed the generous support of the Niuean government.

Niue is a semi-autonomous state in loose association with New Zealand (all Niueans are also New Zealand citizens). Only slightly larger than Easter Island with 259 square kilometers, Niue (pronounced Nee-oo-ay) is one of the largest raised coral islands in the world. It is luxuriantly tropical, with fine swimming and superb fishing possibilities for visitors. The Niueans are "old-Polynesia" friendly: wide smiles and waves greet you along the road. Ten years ago there were 3,000 left on the island; now only some 1,600 remain. More Niueans (the Premier cites the figure 18,000) now live in New Zealand than in Niue. Three-quarters of the island houses stand derelict, their owners gone forever. Driving around the island is like taking a ghost-town tour, but with coconut-heavy palms and luxuriant growth and scudding clouds over pristine, and there are empty LDS churches ... with not a soul in sight.

The policy of Niue's present Premier is to encourage tourism before all else, and for this reason the participants of the conference "Leo Pasifika" were wined and dined with more than customary Niuean hospitality. In addition to four days of academic papers came hours of dignified Polynesian speeches welcoming honored guests from as far afield as Tokyo and Germany. Loud, polyphonous Polynesian singing, accompanied by wonderfully sensuous and often riotously humorous dancing, followed each local presentation. And sumptuous feasts featuring long tables overflowing with crayfish, taro, papaya, yams, sweet potatoes, baked fish, raw fish in coconut milk, roasted chicken, and whole suckling were the daily fare, much to the participants' surprise.

Beyond the importance of the scholarly presentations (participating in the conference were some of the world's leading experts on the languages of Oceania), the immediate presence and active participation of Niuean language teachers and language preservation groups left a profound impression on all non-Niueans. As the surf crashed on the coral reef below the resort hotel's deck, and the wind souged in the high coconut-laden palms, participants presented studies of individual languages of the Pacific, discussed various issues, and thrilled at the Niuean hosts' own serious appeals to save the Niuean language from English's steady encroachment. (Niuean children now speak more English than Niuean). It is hoped that several of the ideas elicited from these discussions will help to address this problem properly in the years to come. Indicative of the Niueans' commitment to language preservation and study is the rare gesture by Niue's Premier: the small nation's chief stood at



the departure gate the evening everyone was leaving Niue, to shake each person's hand, thank them for attending the conference, and wish them a safe journey home. Very few of the participants had been to Niue before this conference. But all left as friends, vowing to return one day.

"Leo Pasifika" was more than a simple linguistics conference. It was the rediscovery of a South Pacific many of us had believed long gone. This was the best gift of all from the wonderful people of Niue.

[Publisher's note: The conference proceedings—"Leo Pasifika: Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Oceanic Linguistics"—is being edited by Steven Roger Fischer and Wolfgang Sperlich and published by the Institute of Polynesian Languages and Literatures, PO Box 6965, Wellesley Street, Auckland, New Zealand. Estimated publication date: December 1999.]

#### TAHITI

FOR THE FIRST TIME, French authorities admit that cracks have been found in the coral cones at Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls, the nuclear test sites in French Polynesia. Although they argue that the sites are safe, the admission of fractures throws doubt on their other claims about the effects of nuclear testing.

*Pacific News Bulletin*, vol. 14(6) June 1999

#### PITCAIRN

THE *BOUNTY* CANNON was raised from its resting place off Pitcairn Island on January 8<sup>th</sup> after 209 years on the bottom. A small pneumatic hammer was used to cut away the rock from around it. The Governor and Island Council gave permission for the cannon temporarily to be removed to Australia to undergo conservation. It will then be returned to Pitcairn where it is expected to become the core of a Pitcairn Island Museum display of items from the *Bounty*.

The latest head count for Pitcairn is 46, with 34 being Pitcairners and 12 outsiders. Approximately 40 ships a year come to the island.

*The Pitcairn Miscellany* 42(1, 3) 1999

#### HAWAI'I

THE HÖKULE'A'S VOYAGE TO RAPA NUI IS UNDERWAY. Two new *ki'i*, wood carvings draped in flower *lei*, were lashed to the stern of the sailing canoe to help guide the canoe on its voyage to Easter Island. The Hōkule'a left in June on the most difficult voyage yet for this famed sailing canoe. By mid-July it landed in the Marquesas, but only after missing the islands on the first pass by sailing 200 miles too far to the west. There was some worry that the Hōkule'a might sail too close to reefs in the area, but managed to get downwind of them and reached Nuku Hiva safely.

From there, the canoe sails to Mangareva (Gambier Islands) and then to Rapa Nui. The final leg of the journey will be the real test, and one that is potentially the most dangerous. The *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (16 June 1999) noted that the fiberglass hulls of the Hōkule'a have developed fine cracks since the ship was built 25 years ago, but the canoe was taken down to the "bare bones" and repaired before the trip.

The captain, Nainoa Thompson, said that Hawai'i's navi-

gators always felt the Rapa Nui voyage was too difficult, but the "instinctive spirit of all Polynesians to want to be *ohana*" convinced them to make the trip. With the voyage to Rapa Nui, traditional navigators will have retraced all the major migration routes of their Polynesian ancestors. The Hōkule'a has logged nearly 100,000 miles, the equivalent of sailing around the world 2½ times. The voyage to Rapa Nui will be tracked by 100,000 students throughout Hawai'i and one million worldwide via internet, radio satellite telephone, and radio calls from the canoe. Five women are included in the crew of the Hōkule'a, two of whom are apprentice navigators.

Follow this historic voyage on the web page of the Polynesian Voyaging Society.

### What's New in Hangaroa

THE PROJECT TO PAVE THE COASTAL ROAD of the island is expected to start early next summer. Most of the problems with monuments along the road were satisfactorily solved, with stone walls being erected in order to prevent vehicles from driving directly into the sites. What this means for tourists is that vehicles now must park a fair distance from some of the sites (including Vaihu, Akahanga, and Te Pito Kura) forcing visitors to walk.

A VERY DRY SUMMER on the island was followed by torrential rains in July that caused severe damage to the sites at 'Orongo. A wall fell down after a heavy rain, and several others became destabilized. One is a long stone house with paintings inside, located to the north of Mata Ngarahu (the focus of 'Orongo and where the petroglyphs are concentrated), it is feared that most of it could fall down the cliff into the sea. Another house that was previously restored is near collapse, as is a section of a wall on the crater-side of the platform where visitors stand to see the petroglyphs. Officials are considering the closure of Mata Ngarahu. If this site is not stabilized, its life span will be a short one.

THE PROJECT TO BUILD A NEW SCHOOL for the island was approved. It will be constructed on land that was part of the old leper sanitarium, north of the village. Plans call for a cultural space with a museum, and a gymnasium. It is said that the total cost will come to more than US\$800,000. UNESCO has set aside funds for the project and will organize an international competition for the work. The design must take into consideration the climate, distances, customs and "architectural styles". One positive aspect is that few archaeological remains are in that area, five km from the village center. It is possible that the village now will begin to expand in that direction.

*El Mercurio de Valparaíso* 14 July 1999

PLANS ARE AFOOT TO PROMOTE TOURISM on Easter Island. A US\$240,000 project is underway to create a new tourist image for the island, with the idea of improving the main economic activity of the island. The plan was elaborated by the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism and hotel owners. In charge of the project is Victor Hugo Aguilera of the Centro de Innovación Tecnológica Empresarial (CINDE) who commented that one of the basic needs is training courses. Also, market strategies are needed to determine weaknesses and to direct future plans. The

islanders want to aim their product at a specialized tourist; most of those who come to the island do it mainly for the cultural aspects.

BECAUSE OF AN IMPENDING STORM, the captain of the supply ship *Hotu Matu'a* moved from the bay in front of Hangaroa to anchor at La Pérouse Bay, but once there scraped bottom. A quick check of the ship showed no leaks but a closer inspection was carried out, according to Maritime Governor Captain Bernel Badilla. Captain Jorge Olivares traveled to the island to evaluate the situation, partly by examining a video made by scuba divers of the outside of the hull. After the ship was unloaded of its 800 tons of food and machinery, an inspection revealed a small leak but it was sealed with epoxy and it was decided that the ship could make it back to Valparaíso. Badilla reported that after the accident, the ship was leaning 10 degrees, but stabilized at 5 degrees. The ship, formerly the Naval transport *Piloto Pardo*, was bought by Rapanui islander Orlando Paoa in 1998.

On July 13<sup>th</sup>, it was announced that the ship arrived safely at Valparaíso and the damages are being studied to determine what repair work will be needed.

*El Mercurio de Valparaíso*

CUTBACKS IN FUNDING CAUSED A CRISIS, according to Mayor Petero Edmunds, who threatened to 'quit being a gentleman' and take drastic action against the government. He claimed that after mid-July there would be no more municipal funds, due to cutbacks that the Common Municipal Fund suffered this year and that has drastically affected the Island municipality as well as others in the region.

Edmunds stated that the minimum amount to operate is US \$68,000 a month; but only US\$36,000 will be available. Questioned about how the Mayor and others felt about this crisis, Edmunds replied: "We are quite worried because already we have a bad economy on the island due to fewer tourists." Asked what will happen with the civil servants for the rest of the year if they are not paid, Edmunds replied that he believed "...that it would be just if they were to seek court action, but I have nothing to pay them with. In my case and that of the Municipal Secretary, we cannot abandon ship because there is a law against that and we would be accused of abandonment of our duties."

In response to Edmunds, the Intendente of the V<sup>th</sup> Region, Gabriel Aldoney, stated that it is an obligation that state institutions continue to function. He noted that Easter Island has exceptions that affect the income of the municipality in that there is neither a charge on vehicles nor on the collection of garbage.

In an interview, Mayor Edmunds noted that it was strange to have to accept work without a salary because "just a while ago, we were pounding our chest and saying that we were the jaguars of South America, and now we would not even pass for a wet cat." Edmunds added "What is happening is that we are so dependent; we are like a raft drifting in the ocean and have to take care with the revolutionaries. We are all part of the government and thus more or less tied together, but on the other hand, we are disillusioned because we do not understand what is going on."

Queried about whether he would really close down the mu-

nicipalidad between August and December, Edmunds replied, "What other alternative is there? My relation with personnel is very good and I could ask them to work without pay, but it would pain me to do so, because I know their families and they depend upon their salary to feed and care for their children. It is a critical and grave situation."

Two days later, Subsecretary Marcello Schilling assured that the *municipalidad* of Easter Island will get emergency funds to continue functioning until the end of the year. These funds will be forthcoming because Rapa Nui has no resources of its own. It only remains that Mayor Edmunds travel to the continent to attend a meeting about the matter, and that the discussion will also look into the island's budget. As for a long-term solution, it is being proposed that Common Municipal Funds be distributed differently, with 2% being divided between municipalities with fewer than 5000 inhabitants.

*El Mercurio de Valparaíso*, 26 June 1999

THE TENSE SITUATION CAUSED by the detention of Senator Augusto Pinochet in England has delayed the financing of a project of tele-medicine between the V<sup>th</sup> Region and Easter Island. The project is supported by the European Union. The regional Minister of Health indicated that the project is being developed by a Chilean resident in Spain, Christian Barrio (who runs a center of health information). "The financing has been accomplished but things are now complicated because it is a Spanish community (Galicia) that has supported it, and they tell us that the project is behind schedule because of the problems about Pinochet's detainment and possible extradition to Spain". The project costs US\$20,000 and it will permit bringing health services and professionals to the island. This technology has been used in Spain for several years between the Canary Islands and the continent.

*El Mercurio de Valparaíso*, 26 June 1999

NEW OPTION FOR A PIER. At the beginning of July a team of professionals from the *Dirección de Obras Portuarias* (DOP, or the Dept of Port Works), traveled to Easter Island for an inspection of alternatives for the building of a new pier. This project will be presented to the regional government before the end of the year. Regional director of DOP, Mario Muñoz E., saw the initiative as providing a solution to one of the oldest problems on the island: the lack of a pier for ships carrying regular supplies to the island.

According to Muñoz, all previous alternatives will be considered and a totally new proposal will be made to the island and to regional authorities. Nevertheless, he noted that there are two options that have been considered and have little chance of success, one for the high cost, and the other for the opposition by the islanders.

In the first case, it was the project of a pier in Papa Haoa, a place near the village of Hanga Roa that has as an advantage in that there would be a minimum cost of land transport to the town, but to build here has a high cost, around US\$50 million. This project was evaluated and had favorable perspectives in 1984, but the earthquake of 1985 absorbed all the assigned funds, and since then the project has not been reconsidered because of the expense.

He indicated that the DOP team will evaluate the possibility of a pier in Punta Ana, Hanga Roa, Hanga Piko, and Mataverí Otai on the west coast; Vinapu, Vaihu and Hotu Iti on the south coast; and Anakena, Ovahe and Taha Roa on the northeast side of the island.

*El Mercurio de Valparaíso 30 June 1999*

A PROJECT LINKING THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION was recently extended to Easter Island with the incorporation of its school, Lorenzo Baeza Vega. The project (which functions for the whole country) creates a network between educational institutions equipped with new computers, networks, internet, multimedia and education software to be used by the students. For them, the Ministry has established central zones that correspond to academic entities responsible for the coordination of the programs and the abilities of the teachers who participate in the process.

In the case of Easter Island, the program depends on the Central Coast Zone of the Catholic University of Valparaíso (UCV). The program, directed by Eduardo Meyer, benefits 941 students in grammar school, junior high, and high school. It is grouped into 33 courses with all 55 teachers on the island participating. The project has two stages, the first for training of the teachers by the professors of UCV for 15 days. The second incorporates the students into the system, and is reinforced by workbooks for the students.

*El Mercurio de Valparaíso 6 July 1999*

THE AIR TERMINAL UPGRADE IS COMPLETED and the transferring of US\$200,000 to the Municipalidad of Easter Island for the development of its infrastructure was announced on 12 July by the Subsecretary of the Ministry of Public Works, Juan Carlos Latorre. Latorre traveled to the island to carry out various tasks, among them being the inauguration of the new air terminal upgrade at Aeropuerto Internacional de Mataverí, including new quarters for the Servicio de Extinción de Incendios (SEI) of the airport. The Mayor of Rapa Nui, Petero Edmunds, made it clear that it is necessary to develop a sanitation plan for the island, including sewers and sewage treatment. He also noted the need for studying the problem of water rights on the island. Latorre visited the pier at Hanga Piko as well as fishing harbors (*caleta*) to see how the infrastructure could be improved.

*El Mercurio de Valparaíso 13 July 1999*

THE MUSEO ANTROPOLÓGICO P. SEBASTIÁN ENGLERT inaugurated a new permanent exposition in July. The design and mounting of the exhibit was financed by the Dirección de Bibliotecas, Archivos y Museos, and the Fundación Andes.

THE NUMBER OF RAPANUI in the world is estimated at less than 4000, but rapidly increasing. Approximately 3000 residents are on the island, and some 300 live in French Polynesia. Continental Chile has about 700 more, and around 50 live in the United States. A few are scattered throughout Europe and New Zealand, and one has surfaced in Israel where he has been a resident for more than 25 years! (*Thanks to Fr Francisco Nahoe and Grant McCall who shared these figures with us*).

A NEWS ITEM OUT OF AUSTRALIA, "International Effort to Reforest Easter Island" by *Radio Australia* correspondent Michael Birt, reported that Australia will help in the Easter Island reforestation effort by supplying stock generated from seed that was propagated at Melbourne's Royal Botanic Garden. Birt is quoted as saying, "Easter Island was once covered with the tree *Sophora Toromiro*. The last example there died 38 years ago. Only about 20 are known to exist in botanic gardens around the world. Eight are in Melbourne's Botanic Gardens." The Melbourne trees exhibit three genetic lines, an important base for the species' long term viability.

Information concerning the Toromiro Management Group activities is available by e-mail [cpdu@rbgkew.org.uk](mailto:cpdu@rbgkew.org.uk) or [www.rbgkew.org.uk/conservation/Toromiro/toro\\_t1.html](http://www.rbgkew.org.uk/conservation/Toromiro/toro_t1.html)

AS REPORTED IN THE *Wall Street Journal* (27 July 1999), a strange chemical in a soil sample from Rapa Nui is nearing approval as one of the most promising new transplant drugs in more than a decade. Called *Rapamune*, it reduces the frequency of rejection in kidney transplants. Scientists are confident it will do the same for heart and other organ transplants. The soil sample was collected in 1964-65 during the Canadian Medical Expedition to Easter Island (METEI). This remarkable scientific expedition was written up in *RNJ* [Vol. 6(2), Vol. 6(3) and Vol. 6(4)]. METEI evolved from medical research undertaken in the early 1960s by Dr Stanley Skoryna of McGill University, Montreal. The project was a scientific undertaking but, by chance, they found themselves in the midst of a revolt on the island (a story that would make a great movie!)

## What's New in Chile

### JUAN FERNANDEZ ISLANDS (OR, DREAMS OF GLORY)

The great treasure hunt in the Robinson Crusoe islands is not over yet. An investigator from the United States, Bernard Keiser, hopes to return in November to look for a treasure that he is convinced is hidden in the cave near Puerto Inglés (see *Rapa Nui Journal*, Vol. 13(1):20-21. According to information from the mayor of Juan Fernández, Leopoldo González Charpentier, Keiser has requested a new five-year concession to search for the treasure. He abandoned work last February after three months of unfruitful labor.

The mayor of Juan Fernández claims that a great rock found some two meters below the surface constitutes the door of a cave where gold ingots lie hidden, left there in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by English corsairs. It is said they have a value of more than 10 billion dollars. It is speculated that the treasure, snatched from Spanish ships commercializing with the colonies, would be found between 6 and 8 meters deep on a line 80 meters from the line of high tide. The excavations last February were made 100 meters from this line.

The mayor believes in the reality of the treasure, noting that there are islanders who have found coins from that epoch after heavy rains. He added that the Chilean government would keep 75% of the total value of the finding, but enough should remain in the budget of Juan Fernández to satisfy its necessities.

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